Frequently Asked Questions for Stage 2 of the August 2019 Call for Proposals

Updated January 8, 2020

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53. Is it possible to get a list of the file types and extensions that will work?

54. Is there a space/part in the application form for an appendix? Additional supporting text or figures?

55. Given the limited character count, can we embed roll-over links as sources for evidence for our project? Should there be hyperlinks to source information? There is no need for citations, e.g. MLA or APA citation, correct?

56. For in-kind and other financial contributions, should this indicated in the letters of support? In the case where we have contribution agreements are those agreements sufficient as proof of contribution?

57. You mentioned that the target audience, intended group of people that the application addresses, *needs* to be included in the program creation? Or did I hear that wrong?

58. Regarding the inclusion of the target group in the project, would you hope to see this with youth and child relevant programs as well?

59. Is the work plan specific to knowledge mobilization or for the project overall?

60. How many projects will be selected funded under the innovation stream?

61. Is it possible to access a downloadable version of the application questions?

62. Do rural workers fall under the EDI demographic groups?

63. In the capacity section of the application, there are a lot of questions about the organization. I am from a research unit within a college, should I report on the Board at the college, or the leadership within our research unit?

64. We have a credentialed evaluator but are very interested in working with FutureSkills Centre in this process. If selected, will you be a partner in the design of the evaluation?

65. If we create a knowledge [work] product, are we able to sell this commercially, or would this need to be publically available at no-cost?

66. In the full proposal application form, Section B, Q5, applicants are asked to ‘describe the problem the project is trying to solve’. There are special instructions if your project is intended to "Optimize Skills Development System". Can you explain what this means?

67. In some cases, especially when the intent of the application is to provide the infrastructure for larger scale transformative impact, some of the evidence supporting outcomes may only be realized later in the project lifecycle. I’m assuming this is okay if both progress evaluation and attending risks are effectively addressed?

68. How are you able to differentiate support letters versus partner letters?

69. Does the 1:1 match include both cash and in kind contribution?

70. What are the issues that would create red flags for you in an application?

71. How soon will questions be answered and where will the answers be posted?

72. Can you describe the types of evidence? Must it be formal, experiential, experimental, anecdotal?

73. How is the theory of change distinct from the logic model?

74. Can we expect a longer term relationship to you and the others in the community of practice you are developing?

75. Can there be two co-lead organizations or must there be one clearly defined lead organization?

76. Must all contracted delivery agencies be in place with preliminary agreements at the point of submitting the proposal?

77. Can we make adjustments to the budget submitted at stage one?

78. We need to develop an evaluation tool/assessment plan as part of the project (by an independent agent). Is it okay if that plan is an early project deliverable and not in the proposal?

79. What part does the Future Skills Centre and Blueprint ADE play in evaluation?

80. Can I change the budget template?

81. What happens if I want to edit my application after submitting?

82. What is the difference between evidence- and innovation-stream projects, in terms of readiness for evaluation?

83. Any guidance on what you're looking for in terms of in-kind amounts versus cash matching contributions?

84. You mentioned there was no relationship to the Ministers Future Skills Council, please elaborate on the relationship of our contributions to their learning?

85. On the budget template, under Lead Organization Income, where does the lead organization indicate the project contracts (contribution agreements and other contracts) that it has?

86. Under project expenditures, where do we indicate contractor/consultant and pilot organization expenses that pertain directly to the project?

87. Is overhead an eligible budget item? If so, should it go under Other Expenditures (PE10)?

88. I'm not able to access the link to the full application form. What should I do?

89. What is the process for us to hire an external project evaluation consultant. Do we build the costs into our two-year project?

90. When will be the next webinars?

91. Your Guidelines and Instructions for Stage 2 Applications indicate that the FSC-CCF's evaluation team will co-design the evaluation approach and tools with the project proponent and that the proponent will be matched with a qualified independent evaluator. It is not completely clear to us whether the appointed evaluator's role is to advise, oversee, monitor and support OR whether they actually conduct the evaluation. Can you please clarify which is correct?

92. As a municipality applying to this program, are we required to fill out all of the sections (particularly those in Section C "Organizational Health -Governance)?

93. Please clarify "management letter" re: Section C2 Financial Question 3. Management letters can serve as 1) an attestation of accuracy or 2) a vehicle to communicate deficiencies; the content is very different.

94. In our initial concept, we proposed an entire project from concept, through design, and into program delivery, testing, and evaluation with high level/conceptual financials. There are still a number of unknowns regarding specific budget elements as we continue to form our strategic partnerships. Is it possible to propose the project design phase only at this point in time? This would enable time to comprehensively develop the approach, associated localization needs and partnerships to ensure that the greatest impact can be made. If yes, are there any questions within B1, B2 & B3 that would be optional for completion?

95. Our lead organization is new as such we do not have governance, by-laws, previous financials, or any full time employees established. This will mean several large sections of the application will be sparse. Are we still eligible? Would it still be possible to be awarded funds? Would you advice on proceeding?

96. Is it ok to change the name of the project in the Letter of Interest to a new project name at stage two?

97. Is it OK to expand on the project or would FSC like us to stay as close as possible to the original submitted project?

98. We are preparing the stage two budget and need to know if we should add costs for an external developmental evaluation. I assume that we have to pay Ryerson for their assistance with this.

99. In the webinar and FAQ, it seems that there is a place to upload figures and the reference list. When I go through the application, I am only see spots to upload the budget, logic model, theory of change. I would like to use graphs from a recent employer survey that our organization completed to support our projects unique value.

100. Can you please clarify the person designated as the Project Lead? Does this refer to the technical lead or the person responsible for contract management, project tracking and reporting? Can you put two people in the submission?

101. Does character count exclude spaces?

102. Question 1 [in section B3 Project Design in the Application Form] is about the "project" which I interpret as what the [FSC-funded] project is designed to do. Questions 2 and 3 also speak to the "project", however, it looks to me like the answers should be less about laying foundation for scale and more about the model/innovation itself.

     In questions 2 and 3 are you interested in evidence/examples of laying foundation for scale, or evidence/examples of the effectiveness of the particular type of workforce development innovation?

103. Where should the reference list for my project be uploaded?

104. Under project expenditures, where should lead organizations indicate partner organization expenses that pertain to proposed project activities? Are they to be placed with professional services expenses under row PE10, or as part of the more detailed breakdowns of expenses in the other rows of the template?

105. What is the best way to submit additional documents such as a feasibility study and business plan?

106. Is it possible to modify the budget template to provide more detailed information on our budget? E.g. notes and details on how numbers were calculated.

107. The audited financial statement for my organization is not expected before February/March 2020 (however, the deadline for the full application is January 13 2020). Shall we provide the audited financial statements for 2017/2018 and 2018/2019 and submit the statement for 2019/2020 once available?

108. Does the Future Skills Center request a breakdown of *all* government grants our organization received in a given fiscal year or only a breakdown of those grants specific to the project?

1. **If an organization has a current Funding Agreement with the Future Skills Centre, can it submit a new proposal under this Call?**

In order for the Centre to identify, test, measure, and share innovative approaches regarding skills needs, we seek a range of proposals and encourage all eligible organizations to apply under this Call. Please refer to the Organization Eligibility section of the Call for Proposals Guidelines.

An organization with a current Funding Agreement can submit one Letter of Interest as the lead organization to this Call. It can participate as a partner on one or several Letters of Interest.

Additional funds for the continuation of existing activities and/or to support substantive scope changes of currently funded projects are not eligible for funding under this Call.

2. **How are the following defined: essential skills; skills development; skills development systems; skills development infrastructure; and, training methods?**

Essential skills include reading, writing, document use, numeracy, thinking, computer use/digital skills, soft skills (e.g. problem-solving, oral communication, working with others) and continuous learning skills.

Skills development is defined as the creation or strengthening of skills, which are relevant to the workforce system, that enable individuals to participate in trade(s) or occupation(s).

A skills development system includes the intellectual knowledge; human resources; organizations; networks; infrastructure; policies, institutions, procedures and practices; and physical assets that enable skills identification, transfer, application, testing, etc.

Skills development infrastructure encompasses the digital technologies, intellectual property, physical and other resources related to the formation of skills.

Training methods include in-person, through online platforms, coaching, experiential opportunities or a combination of approaches.

3. **Can I revise an application from a previous Call and submit a Letter of Interest for this Call?**

All submissions will be considered regardless of the outcome of previous requests for funding.

4. **Our project involves costs associated with curriculum modification, assessment development, staff training, equipment, and physical infrastructure costs. Are these permitted?**

All of these costs appear to be eligible as they relate to the direct development and delivery of the project. A full list of eligible and ineligible costs will be shared with shortlisted projects for the application stage; and detailed project budgets will be reviewed at that time.

5. **Who would own intellectual property arising from the project?**

The Future Skills Centre or Canada will not claim any ownership rights in any intellectual property arising from a funded project.

Project proponents must agree to allow FSC and Canada to use all data, information and documentary material related to the project that is necessary for the purpose of evaluation of the project, and verification of compliance with the funding Agreement.

The goal of the Future Skills Centre is to create and disseminate new knowledge and learning for the benefit of Canada and Canadians. As such, project proponents must agree to make public all research and evaluation information resulting from the project, including the project results, interim and final articles, papers, interim and final reports. This would include publication on the FSC website, and through other means that will achieve a wide distribution.

Given the goal of the Centre is to help identity new approaches, interventions and tools that will help Canadians succeed in the current and future workforce, project proponents must agree to use reasonable efforts to make beneficial approaches, interventions or tools developed or tested through the funded project available to the public. This could include making it available free of charge, or for a fee.

6. **Can newcomers to Canada or permanent residents of Canada be included in the target demographics of projects?**

Yes. The Centre has a particular focus on equity-seeking groups and underserved communities, including women, youth, Indigenous peoples, newcomers, racialized peoples, LGBTQ2S+ peoples, persons with disabilities, veterans, and people from rural, remote, and northern communities.

7. **What stream (innovation or evidence) would our proposal fall under if it is based on a series of assessments that have significant bodies of research and are not new to the marketplace, but the combination of approaches is unique?**

As part of the adjudication process for this Call for Proposals, the adjudication panel will assess Letters of Interest to determine whether they best fit in the innovation stream or evidence stream. This would be based on a review of existing substantive evidence (as applicable).

8. **Can an organization that is part of or affiliated with the Future Skills Centre or its partners submit a Letter of Interest?**

All eligible organizations may apply and Letters of Interest would be considered on their own merit. The Future Skills Centre follows strict conflict of interest protocols to ensure that all appropriate measures are taken to identify and avoid unfair advantage and perceived conflicts of interest before and during the review, adjudication, due diligence and selection processes.

9. **What budget items are eligible? Are the following eligible: student scholarships or stipends; indirect costs/overhead?**

Eligible expenditures include:

- Salaries, including benefits for personnel;
- Expenses related to project administration, up to 12% of the funding requested;
- Project participant costs (i.e. honorariums for surveys, focus group participation, etc);

- Office supplies and services;
- Equipment and software;
- Financial and professional services required for the delivery of the project;
- Telecommunications/courier charges (e.g., telephone, Internet, mail and courier);
- Production costs for resource development such as graphic design, printing, translation into other languages, alternative formats;
- Expenses associated with outreach events and training sessions directly related to program activities;
- Audit costs, notwithstanding they are incurred outside of the Project Period;
- The cost of travel, meals and accommodation in accordance with the rates for public servants set out in the National Joint Council of Canada’s Travel Directive; and,
- Hospitality costs incurred in accordance with rates set out in the Directive on the Management of Expenditures on Travel, Hospitality and Conferences, Appendix A, section 2.3 of Canada's Treasury Board.

Ineligible expenses include:

- Costs not directly associated with meeting the deliverables and milestones;
- Costs related to proposal development (including personnel costs);
- Capital costs (e.g. land, building, vehicles, leasehold improvements);
- Entertainment expenses, gifts and alcoholic beverages;
- Reimbursement for airfare purchased with personal frequent flyer points programs;
- Fines and penalties;
- Donations in the form of goodwill and other intangibles;
- Opportunity costs;
- Standard discounts;
- Interest charges;
- Allowance for interest on invested capital, bonds, debentures, bank or other loans together with related bond discounts and finance charges;
- Depreciation of assets;
- Expenses and depreciation of excess facilities;
- Annual general meetings, budget deficits, membership fees, fundraising activities, committee and political meetings, or religious activities;
- Costs covered by other government funding;
- Profit;
- Contingency or unexplained miscellaneous costs; and,
- The portion of the cost of any goods and services purchased by the Recipient for which the Recipient may claim a tax credit or reimbursement.

10. Is there a maximum percentage of direct costs that can be included in the budget?

There is no prescribed maximum percentage for direct costs.

11. What is the maximum percentage of overhead/indirect costs that can be applied to a request?

Eligible expenses can include expenses related to project administration, up to 12% of the funding requested.

12. What would enable a project to qualify for the Evidence Stream over the Innovation Stream? What can be considered as evidence examples?

Evidence Stream projects will have demonstrated that their proposed project effectively addresses a pressing skills development challenge. Evidence would include data and/or information that supports or disputes the proposed intervention. It can be qualitative and/or quantitative. Evidence that could qualify a project for the evidence stream could include previous evaluation results, published literature on the proposed intervention, organizational history of data-driven learning, field leadership approach or organizational history of identifying and implementing best practice.

Innovation stream projects will be in an earlier development phase and need to develop robust theories of change and/or explore to what extent project activities produce target outcomes.

13. Can seniors be considered a relevant target population or an under-represented group?

Seniors can be considered as a target group as they may not be (fully) participating in the workforce.

14. Do projects need to be national in scope or can they be regional or local, based on need?

The geographic scope of the project can be local, regional or national. It can be executed virtually, in-person and/or hybrid formats.

15. Does the Future Skills Centre intend to fund projects that aim to enhance certain sub-components within the post secondary education system, which can be considered as part of a skills development ecosystem?

The Centre is currently seeking proposals for innovative projects that develop and test new or emerging approaches under three broad themes. The post secondary education system is part of the skills development system and therefore is relevant to the third theme.

16. Are programs with a long duration a good fit for this Call?

It depends on a number of factors. For instance, the duration of the project, schedule of activities that are to generate actionable evidence, alternative financing secured beyond the Call time-frame. For this Call, projects must launch by June 30, 2020, and must be completed and funds spent by June 30, 2022 (i.e. the duration of projects is 24 months maximum).

17. What stream (Innovation or Evidence) would our proposal fall under if it is based on a series of assessments that have significant bodies of research but the combination of approaches is unique?

Applications with both new and tested elements will be reviewed carefully by the adjudication panel to determine which evidence-generation approach, and technical support, are best suited to successful implementation of the project. Successful applicants may be asked for more information to help inform the best stream as part of the invitation to submit a full proposal.

18. **The Call indicates that it is designed to fund new activities and the expansion of existing activities to new clients and geographies. Can a project concept originate from outside of Canada?**

Yes

19. **Are 'young people' stated in the Call synonymous with 'youth' in this Call and what is their age range?**

Yes and the age range is 15-30 years old.

20. **Our project will involve working with Indigenous communities and Indigenous youth workers, and we follow the OCAP principles. Will we be able to ensure that we can continue following the OCAP principles in whatever evaluation and knowledge mobilization strategy is co-developed?**

The Centre is presently funding projects that focus on indigenous communities and follow The First Nations principles of OCAP®. The Centre's goal of knowledge mobilization is to distribute information to communities in a way that works for them and is respectful of their beliefs.

21. **My organization is relatively new, is that a disadvantage?**

Applicants can consider the internal and/or external resources available and required to undertake the proposed activities. The adjudication committee will assess the information provided in the Letter of Interest to determine the capacity of the organization or consortium to execute the project.

22. **Can persons who may eventually become self-employed or an entrepreneur, be a target group?**

Yes. The Call does not specify the type of employment a person should eventually attain.

23. **Who is a project partner?**

As it relates to 'Organization Eligibility' in the Letter of Interest, a project partner is the organization that will be jointly applying with the lead organization for funding. Entities providing professional services (i.e. undertaking the project activities and tasks) can include the lead organization, applicant's partners, external organizations.

24. **How many cohorts of training can be undertaken in the maximum project duration (24 months)?**

Project design is the applicant's responsibility although the Centre and/or its consortium partners may meet with grantees to discuss how substantive findings would be generated, as it relates to the Common Indicators Framework and research.

Considerations may include the availability of resources to conduct the training, training duration, data collection and reporting period, number of cohorts required to generate substantive findings (i.e. control and repeats), etc.

25. When will the next call for proposals take place?

Dates for future funding opportunities have not been specified as yet; the Centre will publicize these through the website, newsletter, etc.

26. We noticed that there is no economic impact/minimum participant threshold sections. Do most applicants provide this information in Relevance and Need?

The Letter of Interest indicates the required information and selection criteria related to the problem being addressed and the long-term impacts (i.e. outcomes).

The Centre does not share information on submissions to third parties, external to the grant management processes. The Centre has a Common Indicator Framework which includes socio-economic indicators to be captured through the projects (as applicable). Several of these evaluation indicators are related to economic impact, e.g. employment, salary.

Organizations may add additional indicators related to their projects, and efforts will be made to increase efficiency of data collection, reporting, etc..

The Centre is not prescriptive regarding sample sizes or minimum participant level recommendations. A range of projects may be submitted, some of which may not include participants. In other cases, organizations have the responsibility to make these determinations and apply acceptable and standard best practices of project design, analysis, reporting, etc.

27. Is there a methodology for calculating in-kind contributions? For example, how should we estimate the dollar amount that should be attributed to one-day of professional time and will this be the standard used by all applicants)?

There is no standardized methodology

28. When is the submission deadline for the full proposal?

The deadline is 5 p.m. EST on Monday January 13, 2020.

29. Why do I no longer have access to Bonfire?

Submission of the full proposal (stage two of the process) is through a different application portal, short-listed applications should refer to page four of the Guidelines.

30. Can I meet with Future Skills Centre about the proposal?

We are committed to ensuring all project proponents are treated the same. We are not meeting individually with project applicants or their partners. We will not provide answers to questions by telephone.

The Centre is a series of invitational webinars for applicants and their partners. There is the opportunity for questions at these webinars. Recordings will be posted, and questions will be incorporated into our FAQ page.

Webinar Schedule:

Innovation stream
November 28, 2019 1 p.m. EST (English)
December 3, 2019 1 p.m. EST (English)
TBA (French)
Evidence stream
December 4 at 1 p.m. EST (English)
French Innovation Stream
TBA

Also, applicants may submit questions in writing however all queries *must* be submitted before January 5, 2020 at 5 p.m. EST. (i.e. for all but the last week of the proposal period). Written responses will be prepared and posted for all applicants to see.

31. The full proposal application requires information about formal organizational governance, board composition, organizational risk management and compliance, etc. *How will these questions be evaluated? What scoring / weighting will they be assigned within the proposal review?*

These questions are not scored, but organizational health is a prerequisite for capacity, stewardship and accountability for these significant investments in an organization. Satisfactory organizational health will be a requirement for funding.

32. Are organizations without a formal board governance structure able to qualify for funding within the recently released call for proposals for approved Letters of Intent (LOI)?

The Call for Proposals is open to any eligible organization (i.e. legally incorporated not-for-profit organizations, including not-for-profit social enterprises and registered charities, publicly-funded post-secondary institutions, industry associations, professional associations, an Indigenous organization that is a legal entity, Municipalities or District Social Services Administration Boards, and for profit organizations (provided the project is undertaken at cost, with no mark-ups or profit incorporated).
If your organization does not have a formal board governance structure, you must be able to explain the structure for strategic leadership and accountability in your organization.

33. Is it acceptable to submit our proposal with the post-secondary partner as the lead, as they can respond to all the criteria in the application form?

We are only accepting one proposal for each lead organization. If your post-secondary partner is **not** leading another project, **was** named in the initial LOI, is based in the same geography as your organization, and all partners agree they are the most appropriate entity to lead, you may reorganize the leadership roles in your team.

34. Could be an example of a high-quality completed logic model be shared as an example?

The Centre cannot share previously submitted logic models, to individuals and organizations unaffiliated with the review and adjudication processes, publicly and without consent.
There are open access resources available online, in public libraries, etc. Several of these resources explain results based management and the logical framework approach (LFA). These guides may address goal and

objective development, the "if-then" logic between objectives, SMART indicators, activities and outputs, etc. with examples, taking into consideration available human resources, data proxies, etc.
Some available resources are available at https://whatworks.org.nz/logic-model/
and https://www.thecompassforsbc.org/how-to-guides/how-develop-logic-model-0

Applicants may wish to be mindful of the FSC Common Indicators Framework during the development of their logic model.

35. Do we have to use you logic model template or can we use our own?
Please use the logic model template provided. Proponents may upload their own as a supplementary attachment if they wish.

36. Is there a word count limitation for the logic model?
No, there is no word count. We are looking for high-level, clear summary.

37. Can you please confirm the size of budget for an innovation project?
The Call can provide support up to a maximum of $1.5 M, for direct eligible expenses, *per project* in the innovation stream. An applicant can determine the amount to be requested from the Centre based on the costs of the proposed activities that would enable it to achieve the project objectives (not covered by other sources), the list of eligible expenses, etc.

38. How many projects will be selected for funding with the innovation stream?
The total funding for the call, including both evidence and innovation streams, is up to $36 million. Final decisions about funding will be based on independent assessment of project quality and potential for evidence, organizational health and the need for a balanced portfolio of projects. We estimate that the proposals in the second round have approximately between a one in two to one in three chance of being funded.

39. Will a copy of the webinar slide deck be sent to participants afterwards?
A recording of the webinar, the slide deck and updated FAQs will be sent to all applicants.

40. Do in-kind contributions fit into matching funds or must it be dollar to dollar match?
Yes, in kind contributions could be considered matching funds.

In-kind contributions and matching funds may be indicated in the project budget (as part of the full proposal application). The budget income sections enable the Centre to determine if the income is in-kind or otherwise.

41. Does in-kind contributions include pro-bono support?
Yes.

42. How flexible are you on the 1:1 contribution? What does it depend on?
We are flexible. A 1:1 contribution was not a requirement of this call but is a goal for Centre funding as a whole.

43. We have letters of support on file, that were generated for other applications, can we use them or do we need new ones?

We expect letters of support be closely tailored to this project, showing partners' understanding of the proposal, the objectives of the Centre, and the nature of their proposed contribution and how they will work with the lead organization.

44. Are we limited to partners within Canada?

The lead organization must be a Canadian entity. Partners may be internal and/or external to Canada and they must meet the eligibility criteria outlined in the LOI Guidelines.

45. Can infrastructure expenses be covered by the Call?

No. Please refer to the list of eligible and ineligible expenses. If unclear about the eligibility of an expense, please email the Centre at projects@fsc-ccf.ca

46. The proposal has character limits, do you mean word count not character count? Does the character count include spaces or just letters?

The proposal limits the number of characters, including spaces. The character counts are based on a standard calculation of 1 word to 7 characters in English, 1 word to 8 characters in French.

47. Will there be an opportunity to receive substantial feedback on our LOI submissions? Particularly our logic model? Are there comments that have been recorded by the reviewers?

Feedback will not be provided on specific LOIs, there will however be a summary of the review findings on the Call for Proposal web page the week of December 2.

48. Can we attach figures to the full proposal application?

Yes, there is space to upload graphics or figures. It can be found in section B3 of the application form.

49. Do we need to or is there a preference that we adhere closely to the common outcomes framework outcomes and indicators in our logic model?

All successful projects will have clearly defined outcomes.
The Common Outcomes Framework is not relevant to *all* projects, particularly systems projects. It is, however, applicable to many service delivery proposals where outcomes such as skills gains, employment or improved quality of work are central to the initiative. Where it is relevant, we will consider favourably proposals that have applied the common outcomes framework as it shows an understanding of the goals of FSC and allows us to estimate our collective impact.

50. Is there the ability to submit video files as a part of this submission?

Video files can not be uploaded. Links to videos may be embedded in text, but reviewers are expected to read the text and will not necessarily follow all hyperlinks.

51. The online application portal enables us to save our work but there is a pop-up that indicated that the draft application would be saved for 28 days, or we had up to 28 days to submit our responses. Does the 28 days "renew" each time we save, or would you suggest we simply save our responses in a Word document and then copy and paste everything into the application form closer to the due date?

We are seeking clarification on the 28 day timeframe from the form provider. In the meantime, and for several reasons, we recommend that you develop your draft in a document and copy and paste when you are close to submission.

52. Can image files be submitted as part of the full proposal application? Or would they need to be embedded in the documents?

Image files (e.g.jpg extension) can be uploaded for certain questions.

53. Is it possible to get a list of the file types and extensions that will work?

The full proposal application form accepts PDF uploads for all fields, except the budget field which is for an Excel (xls or xlsx extension) file upload.

54. Is there a space/part in the application form for an appendix? Additional supporting text or figures?

There are a number of points in the application form where you are invited to upload supplementary documents (e.g., evaluations, diagrams relevant to project design, reference lists). There is no space for a general appendix.

55. Given the limited character count, can we embed roll-over links as sources for evidence for our project? Should there be hyperlinks to source information? There is no need for citations, e.g. MLA or APA citation, correct?

Reviewers may, but are not expected, to pursue hyperlinks. Key information should be embedded in the text.

Applicants are asked what evidence they are using to suggest their project will likely be effective. There is space to upload either evaluations or reference lists in response to those questions. Citations (whatever format) for evidence on which you are relying are expected.

56. For in-kind and other financial contributions, should this indicated in the letters of support? In the case where we have contribution agreements are those agreements sufficient as proof of contribution?

Yes, they should be in the letter of support. If you have a financial commitment from a partner, that can be included in the budget.

57. You mentioned that the target audience, intended group of people that the application addresses, *needs* to be included in the program creation ? Or did I hear that wrong?

Proposals will be evaluated on the question of whether applicants have been able to involve representatives of the target audience and key stakeholders in project planning, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The applicant can indicate its engagement efforts and how the target groups contributed (if relevant). E.g. partnership development, board participation, participation in focus groups.

58. Regarding the inclusion of the target group in the project, would you hope to see this with youth and child relevant programs as well?

Yes, we would like to see involvement of youth at every stage. Appropriate ways of involving different communities will vary depending on the group.

59. Is the work plan specific to knowledge mobilization or for the project overall?

The work plan may include knowledge mobilization activities but should cover the project overall.

60. How many projects will be selected funded under the innovation stream?

The Call budget is $36M but the final number of supported projects under this Call is not known at this point, potentially 20-30 projects might be funded. We do not have a fixed number of projects to be funded under the innovation and evidence streams at this stage, it depends on the projects budgets of the strongest projects and representativeness of a range of challenges, beneficiaries groups, etc. (i.e. funding/investment portfolio diversity).

61. Is it possible to access a downloadable version of the application questions?

No, the application form is an online form.

62. Do rural workers fall under the EDI demographic groups?

Yes.

63. In the capacity section of the application, there are a lot of questions about the organization. I am from a research unit within a college, should I report on the Board at the college, or the leadership within our research unit?

The questions about the governance of the organization refer to the institution as a whole. Where, appropriate you may also provide relevant information at the unit/division/department level.

64. We have a credentialed evaluator but are very interested in working with FutureSkills Centre in this process. If selected, will you be a partner in the design of the evaluation?

Projects selected for funding will be expected to be part of collaborative process of designing evidence-generation with Blueprint ADE, our evaluation lead. In some cases we will recommend an independent evaluator paid by the Future Skills Centre. Please view related questions in this FAQ.

65. If we create a knowledge [work] product, are we able to sell this commercially, or would this need to be publically available at no-cost?

There is no restriction on commercializing your work product after the grant period. The intellectual property will belong to the creator of the work product (see the answer to question 5). You are required to cooperate with Future Skills Centre in sharing information that comes out of the funded work.

66. In the full proposal application form, Section B, Q5, applicants are asked to 'describe the problem the project is trying to solve'. There are special instructions if your project is intended to "Optimize Skills Development System". Can you explain what this means?

The special instructions for 'Optimizing Skills Development Systems' in Section B, Q5 are intended to provide greater clarity for projects that are not designed with the express purpose of benefiting a particular population. It is meant to expand the ways in which problems can be defined, to include systems problems, but also to ask that all projects 'draw a line' to how the project will ultimately be beneficial to those seeking to develop their skills.

67. In some cases, especially when the intent of the application is to provide the infrastructure for larger scale transformative impact, some of the evidence supporting outcomes may only be realized later in the project lifecycle. I'm assuming this is okay if both progress evaluation and attending risks are effectively addressed?

Yes, many skills development projects have an impact that extends over years. Your proposal should highlight the long term vision *and* identify some of the short-term progress indicators that are visible within the project time.

68. How are you able to differentiate support letters versus partner letters?

Anyone listed as a partner at the full proposal stage is expected to produce evidence of the partnership in the form of a commitment letter specific to the project showing the shared understanding of the relationship between the parties, how the lead organization and partners are going to work together, and enumerating any financial or in-kind contribution to this project from the partners. Letters of support for the organization's work in general will be far less persuasive to the reviewers.

69. Does the 1:1 match include both cash and in kind contribution?

Yes.

70. What are the issues that would create red flags for you in an application?

A red flag would be a lack of evidence (for evidence stream projects), 'killer' risks that could halt the delivery of the project activities/achievement of outputs, factors that can impact organization health, etc.

71. How soon will questions be answered and where will the answers be posted?

The FAQs will be updated within the next few days but translation requires additional time.

72. Can you describe the types of evidence? Must it be formal, experiential, experimental, anecdotal?

We are looking for the best available evidence. We recognize that not all organizations will be in a position to provide experimental evidence about the effectiveness of their model. Generally, however, the best available evidence that goes beyond anecdotal and experiential learning, e.g. evaluations of related projects which suggest the intervention or approach works; evidence that the skill-set proposed will in fact increase employability, etc.

Even for innovation projects, it will be beneficial if we can see that the model you are proposing is evidence-informed: that you have a reason to believe that the activities you are proposing will lead to desired outcomes. We want strong answers to the question, "What leads you to believe that your proposal will work"?

73. How is the theory of change distinct from the logic model?

A theory of change underpins the logic model. It indicates why you believe your logic model will work. You should include a theory of change, more than just assumptions, particularly applicants in the evidence stream (if applicable).

74. Can we expect a longer term relationship to you and the others in the community of practice you are developing?

Future Skills Centre is committed to supporting the development of networks for knowledge-sharing in the skills development sector. Relationships with organizations like all of you are key to that network-building. We intend to develop multiple avenues for two-way and cross-organizational conversations. We are not making longer-term funding commitments at this time.

75. Can there be two co-lead organizations or must there be one clearly defined lead organization?

We need a clearly defined lead organization. Funds are disbursed to one organization and that entity would take ultimate responsibility for the project. The grantee may have separate independent agreements with partners, contractors, etc.

76. Must all contracted delivery agencies be in place with preliminary agreements at the point of submitting the proposal?

No. The Centre expects letters of support which express a commitment to working together and specify the commitment to a high degree as to what the partner will do; this relates to capacity to deliver. The Centre may or may not fund the submitted full proposal or some of the proposed expenses, applicants are still being assessed so we do not expect these commitments to take a contractual form at the time of submission. The lead organization can decide if it wishes to enter into Memoranda of Understanding, agreements, contracts, etc. in the absence of a funding agreement with the Future Skills Centre.

77. Can we make adjustments to the budget submitted at stage one?

Yes, changes to the budget submitted at stage one (LOI) can be adjusted. We are assessing the full proposals ‘from scratch’.

78. We need to develop an evaluation tool/assessment plan as part of the project (by an independent agent). Is it okay if that plan is an early project deliverable and not in the proposal?

It is hard to answer this question in the abstract. For some projects, an evaluation or assessment plan may be an appropriate early deliverable (as it would allow for collaborative development of an evaluation framework with Blueprint). For other projects, the evaluation itself may be the main object of the funding -- in which case, more detail would be expected at the proposal stage.

79. What part does the Future Skills Centre and Blueprint ADE play in evaluation?

Grantees would collaborate with the Future Skills Centre and Blueprint to integrate evaluation into the project soon after post-award, e.g. help the grantee find an independent evaluator, review the technical skills and resources available within the organization related to do this activity. The strongest case for evaluation needs to be built into the project and so we will work with grantees to co-design an evaluation approach, etc.

80. Can I change the budget template?

The budget is an Excel file that contains calculation formula. Applicants should check that the formula capture any income and/or expenditures added to the file. The budget sections must not be deleted and the file must be uploaded as an Excel file to the full proposal application form.

81. What happens if I want to edit my application after submitting?

The application can be revisited before the deadline, even if you have officially submitted it. No revisions are possible after the deadline.

82. What is the difference between evidence- and innovation-stream projects, in terms of readiness for evaluation?

Blueprint has the expectation that evidence-stream projects will have existing evidence of their effectiveness and have the potential to be replicable or scalable, and address pressing skills development challenges across Canada. The expectation is that evidence-stream projects would be closer to or ready for impact evaluation than projects in the innovation stream.

The questions in the full proposal application form prompt applicants to indicate how your model will help you achieve those goals. If need be, projects should indicate what stage they are what, what supports are needed to move forward, etc. The identification of needs is related to evidence but also to capacity needs, etc. Needs are not viewed negatively by the reviewers, they are seen as an understanding of the organization, the operating environment and what is needed to deliver the project.

83. Any guidance on what you're looking for in terms of in-kind amounts versus cash matching contributions?

No, there is no guidance. A 1:1 match is not a requirement but indicate any resources that have been leveraged. The nature of the contributions is not going to be looked at less favourably in the assessment.

84. You mentioned there was no relationship to the Ministers Future Skills Council, please elaborate on the relationship of our contributions to their learning?

At the governance level, the Centre has an observer role with the Council and bring our learnings from our innovation projects and research strategy to the Council. There is a commitment to communication between the Council and the Centre, but we are operationally independent.

85. On the budget template, under Lead Organization Income, where does the lead organization indicate the project contracts (contribution agreements and other contracts) that it has?

It depends on the party to the agreement/contract. For example, if the lead organization has a contribution agreement with a provincial agency, it can indicate the name of the agency as a sub-heading under row A2, Provincial Grants and the dollar value.

86. Under project expenditures, where do we indicate contractor/consultant and pilot o rganization expenses that pertain directly to the project?

Future contractor/consultant (Professional Services) expenses may be placed under row PE10, Other Expenditures.

Expenses that the organization is incurring already should be placed in the budget, regardless of whether or not they are related to the project. The expenses would be put in the corresponding budget sections under Organization Expenditures. Professional Services incurred before the Funding Agreement term would be placed under E10, Other Expenditures.

Funds incurred by the organization, in relation to the project, cannot be retroactively covered by the Future Skills Centre if the project is ultimately funded. Only eligible expenses incurred within the Funding Agreement term are considered.

87. Is overhead an eligible budget item? If so, should it go under Other Expenditures (PE10)?

Please see the answers to questions 9 and 11. Overhead may be a percentage of the organization's administrative expenses (PE1-PE7), any other administrative overhead expenses not indicated may be placed under PE10.

Applicants may wish to review the Guidelines and FAQs before and throughout the preparation of their full application form.

88. I'm not able to access the link to the full application form. What should I do?

The Future Skills Centre's website was recently updated, please:

1. Clear the cache in your browser

Link to instructions on how to clear cache

2. Access the application form from the August 2019 Call for Proposals web page: https://fsc-ccf.ca/call-for-proposals/august-2019/;

3. Replace any previous shortcuts/bookmarks to the application form.

Please consider contacting the IT department at your organization if the issues persist.

89. What is the process for us to hire an external project evaluation consultant. Do we build the costs into our two-year project?

The Centre will pay directly for the services of an external, independent project evaluation consultant in appropriate cases. Where this occurs, Future Skills Centre or Blueprint will be involved in supporting the hiring of an independent evaluator. If a grantee wishes to undertake other evaluations related to the project, it can determine whether to include the costs of these evaluations in its direct or in-direct budget for funding consideration.

90. When will be the next webinars?

No additional webinars have been scheduled, please see the recordings, Frequently Asked Questions and Guide for the Call.

91. Your Guidelines and Instructions for Stage 2 Applications indicate that the FSC-CCF's evaluation team will co-design the evaluation approach and tools with the project proponent and that the proponent will be matched with a qualified independent evaluator. It is not completely clear to us whether the appointed evaluator's role is to advise, oversee, monitor and support OR whether they actually conduct the evaluation. Can you please clarify which is correct?

The approach to evaluation will vary depending on the readiness of different projects for full evaluation. Every project will receive support from FSC-CCF's evaluation team in developing an evaluation framework and preparing to evaluate and report on results of the activities undertaken with the funding. Selected projects will proceed to full evaluation with a qualified independent evaluator.

92. As a municipality applying to this program, are we required to fill out all of the sections (particularly those in Section C "Organizational Health -Governance)?
A related response is available in the answer to question number 63.

93. Please clarify "management letter" re: Section C2 Financial Question 3. Management letters can serve as 1) an attestation of accuracy or 2) a vehicle to communicate deficiencies; the content is very different.
This question is seeking full disclosure of information about any deficiencies in the financial statements which were identified by auditors.

94. In our initial concept, we proposed an entire project from concept, through design, and into program delivery, testing, and evaluation with high level/conceptual financials. There are still a number of unknowns regarding specific budget elements as we continue to form our strategic partnerships. Is it possible to propose the project design phase only at this point in time? This would enable time to comprehensively develop the approach, associated localization needs and partnerships to ensure that the greatest impact can be made. If yes, are there any questions within B1, B2 & B3 that would be optional for completion?
A complete budget is required as part of the full application in order for the Centre to review the allocations for activities and as a basis for a funding agreement for successful projects.

Applicants should make their best estimate of projected expenses and revenues/contributions, using resources, approaches and tools available (e.g. historical project budgets, expertise) in preparing a complete project budget.

95. Our lead organization is new as such we do not have governance, by-laws, previous financials, or any full time employees established. This will mean several large sections of the application will be sparse. Are we still eligible? Would it still be possible to be awarded funds? Would you advice on proceeding?
It is important to make the strongest case possible for the health of your organization to demonstrate that your organization, with its partners, is a suitable entity to be provided with significant public investment. It may be appropriate to provide information about closely affiliated entities and partners to create a more complete picture of the organization's capacity to deliver the anticipated program and manage funds appropriately.

96. Is it ok to change the name of the project in the Letter of Interest to a new project name at stage two?
Lead organizations may make changes in the project name and specific aspects of delivery (e.g., adding partnerships or new activities), but applicants should not change the basic project concept and scope of work.

We anticipate that many organizations will have changes to budgets or workplans between the original letter or interest, and the full proposal where there is a higher demand for justification and more developed partnerships. Reviewers will be looking only at the Full Proposal, not the original LOI.

97. Is it OK to expand on the project or would FSC like us to stay as close as possible to the original submitted project?

Lead organizations may make changes in the project name and specific aspects of delivery (e.g., adding partnerships or new activities), but applicants should not change the basic project concept and scope of work.

We anticipate that many organizations will have changes to budgets or workplans between the original letter or interest, and the full proposal where there is a higher demand for justification and more developed partnerships. Reviewers will be looking only at the Full Proposal, not the original LOI.

98. We are preparing the stage two budget and need to know if we should add costs for an external developmental evaluation. I assume that we have to pay Ryerson for their assistance with this.

The costs for an external developmental evaluation should not be included in your stage 2 budget.

99. In the webinar and FAQ, it seems that there is a place to upload figures and the reference list? When I go through the application, I am only see spots to upload the budget, logic model, theory of change. I would like to use graphs from a recent employer survey that our organization completed to support our projects unique value.

Evidence supporting the unique value of your model, and/or why you believe it will work, can be uploaded at B3, Question 2: "What evidence do you have that these components of your model will address the needs of the industry sector and/or address barriers for your identified target population"

100. Can you please clarify the person designated as the Project Lead? Does this refer to the technical lead or the person responsible for contract management, project tracking and reporting? Can you put 2 people in the submission?

The project lead is the most appropriate person, in the view of the organization, to receive correspondence from the Future Skills Centre. It should be someone with an overall view of the project who is able to answer questions and ensure information from the Centre is properly shared with partners, other staff within the lead organization, and organizational leadership. The Centre prefers there be only one project lead.

101. Does character count exclude spaces?

The character count in the full Application Form includes spaces.

102. Question 1 [in section B3 Project Design in the Application Form] is about the "project" which I interpret as what the [FSC-funded] project is designed to do. Questions 2 and 3 also speak to the "project", however, it looks to me like the answers should be less about laying foundation for scale and more about the model/innovation itself.
In questions 2 and 3 are you interested in evidence/examples of laying foundation for scale, or evidence/examples of the effectiveness of the particular type of workforce development innovation?

Question 2 speaks to evidence of how the model will address needs and barriers faced by the beneficiaries. The responses from your organization to these questions should speak to the effectiveness of the model. Evidence of the intervention(s) applied outside of Canada can be included. Question 3 speaks to the adaptations that will be applied in the Canadian context (if applicable). Please be sure to review the questions in their entirety in the Application Form.

103. Where should the reference list for my project be uploaded?
It should be uploaded in the Application Form, within section B3 "Project Design", number 2.

104. Under project expenditures, where should lead organizations indicate partner organization expenses that pertain to proposed project activities? Are they to be placed with professional services expenses under row PE10, or as part of the more detailed breakdowns of expenses in the other rows of the template?
Applicants are reminded to firstly review the list of eligible and ineligible expenses (refer to the response to question number 9). Partner expenditures are part of the total project expenditure and should be added to the lead organization's project-related expenses (in the appropriate rows in the Project Expenditure section of the budget template). For example, the partner's staff/personnel expenses should be reported in PD1-PD4 or PE4 (if the partner is providing "people related" services). Other rows for other goods, works and professional services should be completed as relevant (e.g. PE7).

105. What is the best way to submit additional documents such as a feasibility study and business plan?
Relevant and required documents should be uploaded to the appropriate section(s) of the Application Form (available on the Call webpage). Documentation with evidence of feasibility would go in Section B3, #2. Depending on the content of a business plan it might go in the same section or s.3, Q5. We will do our best to read the proposal and supporting documentation as a whole.

106. Is it possible to modify the budget template to provide more detailed information on our budget? E.g. notes and details on how numbers were calculated.
Details are not required at this time (e.g. unit costs and quantities). Additional details may be requested at a later stage of the process, if necessary.

107. The audited financial statement for my organization is not expected before February/March 2020 (however, the deadline for the full application is January 13 2020). Shall we provide the audited financial statements for 2017/2018 and 2018/2019 and submit the statement for 2019/2020 once available?
The organization is required to submit information for the audited 2018 (or 2018-2019) period *and* 2019 (or 2019-2020) as indicated in the Budget Form. In the absence of an audited 2019 or 2019-2020 period, the unaudited information may be provided.

108. Does the Future Skills Center request a breakdown of *all* government grants our organization received in a given fiscal year or only a breakdown of those grants specific to the project?
The Future Skills Centre requires a breakdown of grants that could potentially be considered relevant to the project.